

The National Rural Development Partnership (NRDP) is a network of established and emerging rural institutions that work together to strengthen rural America. The principal members of the network are State Rural Development Councils in 37 of the 50 states.

Each of the State Councils, which are comprised of active members from a broad range of rural development-related organizations, is served by a full-time executive director. States differ in how they are organized and in the rural issues they decide to address.

This profile is one in a series highlighting the work of the State Councils.

For more information about the National Rural Development Partnership:

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**National Rural
Development
Partnership**

State Profile

Connecticut Rural Development Council

The Connecticut Rural Development Council (CRDC) was formed in December 1994 under the leadership of individuals who believed in the value and usefulness of the organization. Its membership includes representatives from local, state, and federal government; regional organizations; and non-profit, private sector, and tribal partners. The Council works to preserve the rich heritage and unique physical, economic, and social qualities of life in rural Connecticut.

CRDC's primary strength lies in its history of building valuable and lasting partnerships through projects. Recent projects include sponsoring nine statewide and regional public information forums on open space and farmland preservation in the past two years, publishing the Connecticut Rural Resources Directory, and organizing a nationally recognized Land Use Education Project. Through partnerships formed on these and other critical projects, the Council has been able to significantly impact key



issues in Connecticut, including rural health, open space and agricultural land preservation, smart growth and land use, and rural road and bridge design.

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With 30 active members and a 7-member Executive Committee, CRDC includes representatives from:

- ▼ The Connecticut State Program Unit at US Environmental Protection Agency Region 1
- ▼ The Connecticut Forest and Park Association
- ▼ Retired Executive Vice President Commercial Loan Division, First National Bank of Litchfield
- ▼ UCONN Cooperative Extension Service
- ▼ Windham Region Council of Governments
- ▼ Mohegan Tribe
- ▼ President, Northwest Connecticut Community-Technical College



Printed on recycled paper

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March 2000

Connecticut Rural Development Council at Work

Land Use Education Partnership

CRDC coordinates the Land Use Education Partnership (LUEP), a volunteer committee of land use and planning experts. LUEP administers a statewide land use training program targeted at local elected planning and zoning commissioners. After a year of curriculum development, CRDC launched the program in February 1998. Since its inception, 13 of the Connecticut's planning regions have completed the training, and the remaining 2 will begin in 2000. The program is so successful that some regions are repeating the training and CRDC is developing additional curricula.

The Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA) recognized LUEP's contributions by presenting its 1999 Professional Planner Award to Linda Cardini, CRDC Executive Director. Cardini presented the project to a national audience at the 1999 National APA conference in Seattle, Washington.

Focusing on Rural Health

Greatly expanding its involvement in human services, CRDC has formed a full partnership with the Connecticut Office of

Rural Health (ORH), which relocated next to CRDC's office at Northwestern Connecticut Community College in early 1999. Both organizations have teamed to provide information and technical assistance, coordinate health programs, recruit health care providers, and promote rural health care interests throughout the state. Outcomes to date include increased awareness of ORH and its programs for rural residents and health care providers, greater understanding among CRDC's member organizations of health care issues, and emergence of a new statewide advocate and policy voice for rural health care. Since relocating, ORH has received a \$200,000 Medicare Flexibility Program grant that will improve rural health outreach and service.

Open Space and Farmland Preservation

CRDC has partnered with agricultural, environmental, academic, and community-based organizations statewide to address issues of open space and farmland preservation. At the request of U.S. Senator Joseph Lieberman, CRDC co-sponsored an Open Space Forum on April 6, 1999, with him and provided input to his proposed legislation. Legislation Senator Lieberman subsequently sponsored calls for funding to provide technical assistance for small and rural communities in the development of open space preservation and conservation plans. In September and October 1999, the Council joined with environmental non-profit partners to stage two Open Space

Grant workshops to educate participants on application requirements and deadlines.

Transportation Issues

Continuing its good relationship with the Connecticut Department of Transportation, CRDC provides information to a network of regional planners, environmental and historic preservation groups, small town associations, and local elected officials on alternative

road and bridge design standards. CRDC co-sponsors SmartGrowth and sprawl forums addressing the link between transportation, land use, and the character of rural communities.

Connecticut Rural Resources Directory

CRDC significantly enhanced networking and communication between rural officials, leaders, and citizens by compiling, maintaining, and disseminating a directory of rural-oriented programs and resources. The Directory, available as a book and on the CRDC web page, has proven to be an effective information source and is a tangible product the CRDC can use to recruit new partners.

"Working with the State Council opens avenues to other agencies and organizations in the state."

**John Hibbard
Connecticut
Forest and Parks
Association**